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Papa Lyman Remembers

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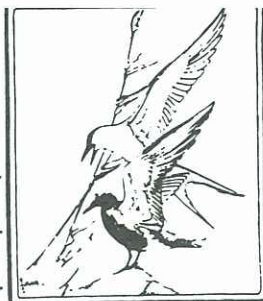
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Papa Lyman Remembers

The Importance of Publishers' Archives

by Lyman Newlin (Book Trade Counsellor) <broadwater@agis.ag.net>



Essentially "Papa Lyman" is brought about because of — bet you guessed it — a book which I have recently received — *A Guide to Book Publishers' Archives* by Martha Brodersen, Beth Luey, Audrey Brichetto Morris and Rosanne Trujillo, published by the Book Industry Study Group, 1996. ISBN 094001663X. Since archives is a form of remembering, I don't think I'm too far off my given theme. Actually this will be a memory-prompted article since it is concerned as much with the contents of publishers' records as it is to point up the need to preserve such records for the good of the industry.

A Guide to Book Publishers' Archives is a start. If I understand the methodology used in collecting information, the authors received answers from less than two percent of the approximately 3,400 publishers which were solicited for information. Though one shudders to speculate on the immensity of the task and size of this book had even fifty percent of the recipients answered the questionnaire, it is clear that more research is needed into this important endeavor. A diligent and consistent search for the whereabouts of archival material of genuinely im-

portant publishers is greatly needed and its importance will increase with the passing of time. I would respectfully suggest that the authors of this *Guide* continue their research by going to the indexes and bibliographies of such important reference books as Cheney: *Economic Survey of the Book Industry*, 1931, National Association of Book Publishers, reprinted, with forward by Frederick A. Melcher and introduction by Robert W. Fraser, R. R. Bowker 1960. Another source is *Book Publishing In America* by Charles A. Madison, New York 1966, McGraw Hill. And, of course, the *Cumulative Book Index* 1928 et seq., H. W. Wilson Co.

Below, from my memory, I will attempt to begin to supply some very limited information about some publishers whose records must be sought out and located by publishing scholars. I am suggesting that these establishments are/were very important to our industry and their archives would be essential to any researcher of the publishing industry. I know I am suggesting a tough assignment. I make no attempt at listing publishers alphabetically; I have decided to "follow my nose" and go from one publisher to the next as memory dictates. I will

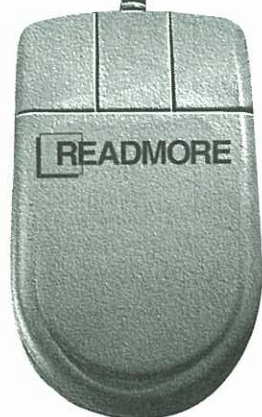
append an alphabetical list of publishers I have written about at the conclusion of this series. (You see, I think it will take more than this one column ... but don't tell our editor.)

The first publisher which comes to mind is **Scott, Foresman and Company**, one of the most important of all textbook publishers. Originally elementary and high school texts were their main product but by mid-century their publications in the liberal arts fields were also bestsellers in the college text market. *Robert's Rules of Order* (I was marketing consultant to S-F for the 7th edition) has gone through many editions. Sales of original, pirated and nicknamed editions would total millions. **HarperCollins** now owns Scott Foresman and HarperCollins is part of Rupert Murdoch's empire.

I will next mention **G. P. Putnam**, which has recently been acquired by the Pearson Group from MCA, which was owned by Seagrams. (It appears that distilling grain into alcohol is more profitable than putting print on wood and rag end-products.) But the story doesn't end with Pearson. There's a story in *Bookselling This Week*, December

continued on page 77

The State of the Art ...working smart



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Papa Lyman
from page 76

2, 1996, that Pearson may become a target of Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation.

Now I'll return to the Putnam Group: One of its components, **Grosset and Dunlap**, G & D, as the company was known to the publishing and bookselling industry for years, was a prime publisher of reprints — notably series for young readers, among which was the bestselling Bobbsey Twins series for girls and the Bound to Win series, including Phil Hardy and Horatio Alger books, for boys. In my time at **Follett (Library) Book Company** we filled many pages of our "Guide to Good Reading" catalogs with Grosset's several series for young readers. I should add that every book in GTGR was approved by one or more state reading associations. This is to say nothing of Grosset's long list of reprinted adult books by popular bestselling authors such as **Pearl Buck**, whose original publisher was **John Day Co.** (one of whose founders was Richard Walsh, who was at one time married to Ms. Buck). The mention of John Day Co. leads directly to Putnam. When Melville Minton (whom I had the pleasure of knowing) took over G. P. Putnam's presidency, he merged it with his own firm, **Minton-Balch & Co.** Along with **Coward-McCann**, Minton-Balch and John Day Co. were very important parts of the Putnam enterprise. All of the above is written to focus on the ever-widening grasp on our industry by the Murdoch megaconglomerate. When one considers this phenomenon, one begins to be haunted with the suspicion that all archival material may wind up in some corporate paper shredder.

Abbeville Publishing Group. Although this company is scarcely twenty years old, it is one of the most important American art book publishers. It was founded by **Harry F. Abrams** after he had sold his namesake company to **Times Mirror**. Abbeville is now headed by **Robert E. Abrams**, son of


Abbeville's founder.

Allyn and Bacon, an important medium-sized textbook publisher, was at one time a part of **Prentice Hall**. I can't believe that there is not a large archival horde somewhere in Englewood, New Jersey, or maybe in New York City or Belmont, California. Prentice Hall, one of the most successful, dynamic and aggressive publishers of the twentieth century was founded in 1913 by two New York University professors who used their mothers' maiden names to form the company's name. Originally a textbook house, it eventually entered the trade field via self-help inspiration books by Norman Vincent Peale (*The Power of Positive Thinking*) and a steadily-increasing list of books to inspire self advancement. The company frequently founded spin-offs. (Some of these were: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co., Kent Publishing Co., Prindle Weber & Schmidt and Wadsworth.) Rumors of consolidations — mergers with conglomerates and family disagreements (to use the mildest word I can apply here) kept the company frequently in the news until it was taken over by **Simon & Schuster** in 1984, which by that time was owned by Gulf + Western, and thereafter has been included in the S & S ownership meandering.

Addison-Wesley is another twentieth century Wunderkind American publisher which was founded in 1942 by **Lew Addison Cummings** and **Melbourne Wesley Cummings**. They were not related in spite of the not-too-common name. They also used their middle names for their enterprise. A-W is now merged with **Longman**, a British publishing, company which went under the name of Longmans-Green for over two centuries before the Pearson Group got control. Here again, we may see another change when, and if, **Thomson** gets a hand in Pearson. There has got to be much archival material about the rapid growth of Addison-Wesley as a leading college textbook publisher.

I remember Melville Cummings as being very interested in getting his high-level science books into retail stores. When I was at **Kroch's and Brentano's** in the 1950s, Mr. Cummings was among the first publishers to make concessions that helped get coverage in the general retail trade. As the name of Longmans-Green is mentioned another American publisher comes to mind: **David McKay Company**. Although its founder was born in Scotland, his company was a Philadelphia institution for years before moving to New York and merging with Longmans. McKay's early success was with Walt Whitman and Shakespeare. Then came Fodor's travel guides and Vance Packard's *The Hidden Persuaders* and succeeding very successful titles. The Fodors were eventually taken over by Random House; Packard went to McGraw Hill.

Packard's only title now in print (according to *Books in Print*, 1995) is published by **Little Brown**, another very important publisher in America for over 150 years. LB over the years has published many bestselling trade books; famous novels by C. S. Forester, A. J. Cronin, J. P. Marquand plus works by top notch authors Alfred Kazin, Sir Osbert Sitwell, Walter Lippmann and many others. Little Brown is now a subsidiary of **Time, Inc.** which is (when last I looked) connected with movie maker **Warner**, which is connected with **Disney Press**, **Hyperion**, et al. I can only remark that this kind of conglomerating suggests that existing archival material should be searched out ASAP, collected and recorded, if there is ever to be a definitive record of book publishing in America's twentieth century.

History is, I believe, best written by those who live it. I hope Katina will let me continue my search for names of publishers whose data should be of great importance to scholars planning to research book publishing in America. With K.S. permission, this may be a series of several parts. 

Back Talk
from page 78

just successfully completed an experiment where we put out lists of these terms as documents that the search robots access. When they hit our term lists, they are automatically redirected to our journals. The mini traps redirect researchers to a specific journal and the macro traps redirect them back to one of our servers which then funnel them to our journals in general."

The expression on Alfred's face indicated his pleasure but he cynically asked, "How long do you think it will take people like Chuck to figure out that something is wrong?"

Jack replied quickly: "If we used it all the time maybe we would be in trouble, but we have two more techniques that we can alternatively use. The first one we're calling

Project Open Door. Whenever a searcher is directed to one of our URL's, instead of closing down the conduit every time a record is shipped over the Internet, our software automatically sends in five more records that share any of the same searching requirements. The researcher gets what he wants but it comes from our journals. The second one we're calling "Operation Trojan Horse. In this case, along with the cookie to report on what else the researcher is looking at, we also stick in some software that after closing off the conduit, it waits 30 seconds and then reopens the door and goes back to our server for some more of our articles." Jack then went on down the agenda with a number of brief reports.

2. Young Scholar's Research Program. "Junior faculty members, in subjects where Angela's data show little research activity, are being given free database searching and

document delivery accounts. They get the data they want, we get the readership we need and the libraries get the bill. We're even giving them some travel stipends so they can afford to attend their professional meetings to give papers. It's a win-win situation."

3. The Best E-journal Contest. Jack continued, "For the past five years we got this ALA subcommittee to sponsor a contest to pick the 10 best freebie e-journals. We gave them enough money to hire some of their members as consultants to act as judges. Once we get the winners, Angela's people give the best ones offers they can't refuse. Usually it doesn't take much. These freebie publishers are making peanuts."

Alfred interrupted, "I thought I heard that Angela had some trouble this past year with one publisher."

continued on page 74